

## **CONSERVATION MEASURES**

### **What is NOAA Fisheries Service doing to prevent harmful interactions and more bottlenose dolphin deaths from occurring?**

We have complemented our national Protect Dolphins Campaign by developing a comprehensive outreach and education strategy specific to areas of the southeast region and localized concerns. The strategy highlights innovative methods for distributing important conservation messages to raise public awareness about responsible viewing of wild dolphins and why feeding wild dolphins is illegal. Ongoing and future education efforts that promote responsible viewing to help prevent dangerous interactions include: posting billboards; presenting at educational workshops; issuing press releases; producing and distributing fact sheets, brochures, and other outreach materials; airing public service announcements for radio and television broadcasts; providing information at conventions, shows, and festivals; posting signs, etc.

In addition to the above-mentioned outreach techniques, we recently identified “Best Fishing Practices for Avoiding Interactions with Dolphins” to further prevent these harmful interactions with recreational gear from occurring. We plan to promote these “Best Fishing Practices” and other conservation messages through various means, such as metal signs at fishing piers, marinas, and boat ramps; wallet/tackle box cards; radio announcements; etc. We are also continuing to work with our partners to better understand the complex nature of interactions between dolphins and recreational gear.

All outreach materials developed will also include the pertinent numbers to report a marine mammal injury or entanglement, or violations of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA).

For more information on our Southeast Region Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Viewing Guidelines, please visit: [www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/education/southeast/](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/education/southeast/)

For more information on the national Protect Dolphin’s Campaign, please visit: [www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/education/protectdolphins.htm](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/education/protectdolphins.htm)

### **How do I report an injured or entangled marine mammal? How do I report a violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA)?**

To report a marine mammal injury or entanglement, visit [www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/networks.htm#southeast](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/networks.htm#southeast) for the appropriate stranding hotline number in your area. To report violations of the MMPA, call NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement 24-hour hotline at (800) 853-1964.

We welcome any suggestions or feedback on safe ways to help prevent dolphin interactions with recreational gear. If you have helpful information, please call Stacey Carlson at (727) 824-5312.

## **Best Fishing Practices for Avoiding Interactions with Wild Dolphins**

### **How were the best fishing practices developed?**

The “Best Fishing Practices” were developed in cooperation with NMFS scientists and fishery managers, and other research groups, including Mote Marine Laboratory and Hubbs-Sea World Research Institute. They were developed by reviewing information gathered from research observations at fishing piers and elsewhere, interviewing recreational anglers, and re-emphasizing current conservation efforts and existing regulations.

### **What are the best fishing practices?**

#### ***Best Fishing Practices for Avoiding Interactions with Wild Dolphins:***

1. Never feed wild dolphins – it is against federal law and is harmful to the dolphins.
2. Avoid tossing leftover bait to dolphins if they are nearby. Make use of leftover bait by taking it home to freeze for later or by giving it to your fishing neighbor.
3. Check your gear and terminal tackle to make sure they are in good shape and will not break too easily, resulting in a lost fish with a hook that could be eaten by a dolphin.
4. Avoid fishing in an area where dolphins are actively feeding – dolphins may mistake your bait or catch for food.
5. Do not release caught fish in the presence of dolphins – this reinforces the association of recreational fishing activities with a food source. Anglers should try to release the fish as far from the dolphin and as quietly as possible.
6. Change fishing locations if dolphins are showing interest in your bait or catch.
7. Do not cast your line toward a dolphin.
8. Use corrodible hooks – any hook other than stainless steel.
9. Use circle hooks – it is believed that they reduce injuries to fish and dolphins.
10. Never try to reel in a dolphin that may be hooked – if a dolphin is hooked and the hook is set, cut the line as close to the dolphin as safely possible. If the hook is not set, put slack on the line and give the dolphin time to release itself.
11. Stay at least 50 yards away from wild dolphins while boating or using personal watercraft.
12. Stow used fishing line. Make sure to collect any broken or used fishing lines to discard in recycling bins (Please visit the Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Program Web site for a list of bin locations: [http://floridaconservation.org/mrrp/bin\\_information.asp](http://floridaconservation.org/mrrp/bin_information.asp)). If a recycling bin is not available, please discard in a secure bin. It’s against Florida law to intentionally discard monofilament into area waters because such line can kill or injure marine mammals, birds and sea turtles.

### **Are there approved or suggested devices to deter dolphins from depredating on recreational gear?**

There are currently no approved or suggested avoidance devices to actively deter or prevent dolphins from depredating on recreational fishing gear. Research efforts are exploring the use of various techniques for effective and benign methods. In the meantime, we recommend following the “[Best Fishing Practices for Avoiding Interactions with Dolphins](#)” to prevent harmful interactions.

**What if I am fishing and dolphins come over and do not leave the area where I am fishing?**

If dolphins do not leave the area, we recommend trying another fishing location as far away from the dolphin(s) as possible. Some fishing guides and anglers have reported that fishing success may decline at a site where dolphins are actively feeding. If the dolphin does not leave, or if it follows your vessel, we recommend ceasing fishing activity for a short time to discourage the dolphin’s behavior.

**How long does it take for a corrodible hook to corrode?**

It may take anywhere from a couple of days, to weeks, or more for a corrodible hook to dissolve. Hooks are made from different alloys, with different coatings, that all affect how long they last. Using corrodible hooks in combination with other preventative measures may help reduce the chance of these interactions, as well as the degree of serious injury caused to the dolphins.